

Arthur W. Marchmont



*In the Name
of the People*

Arthur W. Marchmont

In the Name of the People



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066426613

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I AN UNPROFITIOUS START

CHAPTER II DEVELOPMENTS

CHAPTER III THE RECEPTION

CHAPTER IV MIRALDA

CHAPTER V INEZ

CHAPTER VI DR. BAROSA

CHAPTER VII SAMPAYO IS UNEASY

CHAPTER VIII MIRALDA'S MASK

CHAPTER IX THE INTERROGATION

CHAPTER X A DRASTIC TEST

CHAPTER XI POLICE METHODS

CHAPTER XII THE REAL "M. D."

CHAPTER XIII MIRALDA'S CONFIDENCE

CHAPTER XIV ALONE WITH SAMPAYO

CHAPTER XV IN THE FLUSH OF SUCCESS

CHAPTER XVI BAROSA'S SECRET

CHAPTER XVII A LITTLE CHESS PROBLEM

CHAPTER XVIII DAGARA'S STORY

CHAPTER XIX SPY WORK

CHAPTER XX A NIGHT ADVENTURE ON THE RIVER

CHAPTER XXI PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

CHAPTER XXII READY

CHAPTER XXIII ON THE RAMPALLO

CHAPTER XXIV A TIGHT CORNER

CHAPTER XXV ILL NEWS

CHAPTER XXVI IN SIGHT OF VICTORY

CHAPTER XXVII DR. BAROSA SCORES

CHAPTER XXVIII "YOU SHALL DIE"

CHAPTER XXIX MIRALDA'S APPEAL

CHAPTER XXX JEALOUSY

CHAPTER XXXI A NIGHT OF TORMENT

CHAPTER XXXII A HUNDRED LASHES

CHAPTER XXXIII THE LUCK TURNS

CHAPTER XXXIV ON THE TRACK

CHAPTER XXXV THE PROBLEM OF AN EMPTY HOUSE

CHAPTER XXXVI UNTIL LIFE'S END

CHAPTER I

AN UNPROFITIOUS START

Table of Contents

“318, RUA DE PALMA,
“LISBON,
“September 20, 1907.

“MY DEAR MURIEL,—

“I’m here at last, and the above is my address. The *Stella* dropped her anchor in the Tagus yesterday afternoon, and within half an hour I was at the Visconte de Linto’s house. That will show you I mean my campaign to be vigorous. But the Visconte and his wife are at Coimbra, and Miralda is with them. I should have been off in pursuit of her by the first train; but I managed to find out that they are with friends there and will be back to-morrow for a big reception. As that is just the sort of place I should choose before all others for the meeting with Miralda, I promptly set to work to get an invitation. I have done it all right. I got it through that M. Volheno whom you and Stefan brought on a visit to us at Tapworth, just after I got home from South Africa. Tell Stefan, by the way, that Volheno is quite a big pot and high in the confidence of the Dictator. I told him, of course, that I had come here about the mining concessions in East Africa; and I shall rub that in to every one. I think his mouth watered a bit at the prospect of getting something for himself; anyway, he was awfully decent and promised me all sorts of a good time here. Among the introductions he mentioned was one to the de Lintos! I kept my face as stiff

as a judge's; but I could have shrieked. Imagine a formal introduction to Miralda! 'Mademoiselle Dominguez. Mr. Donnington,' and those eyes of hers wide with astonishment, and her lips struggling to suppress her laughter! I really think I must let him do it, just to see her face at the moment. Anyway, I shall see her to-morrow night. Ye gods! It's over four months since I fell before her beauty as intuitively as a pagan falls before the shrine of the little tin god he worships. I hope no one has got in the way meanwhile; if there is any one—well, I'll do my best to give him a bad time. I'm not here for my health, as the Yanks say; nor for the health of any other fellow. By all of which you will see I am in good spirits, and dead set on winning.

"By the way, I hear that things are in the very devil of a mess in the city; and Volheno told me—unofficially of course—that the streets are positively unsafe after dark. But I was out for a couple of hours last night, renewing my acquaintance with the city, and saw no ripple of trouble. After his warning I shoved a revolver in my pocket; but a cigar-holder would have been just as much good. I should rather like a scrap with some of the Lisbon ragamuffins.

"I've taken a furnished flat here; yacht too awkward to get to and from; and a hotel impossible—too many old women gossips.

"Love to your hub and the kiddies.

"Your affect. brother,
"RALPH.

“PS. Think of it. To-morrow night by this time I shall have met her again. Don’t grin. You married a Spaniard; and for love too. And you’re not ashamed of being beastly happy. R. D.

“PPS. Mind. I hold you to your promise. If there is any real trouble about M. and I need you, you are to come the moment I wire. Be a good pal, and don’t back down. But I think I shall worry through on my own.”

I have given this letter because it explains the circumstances of my presence in Lisbon. A love quest. In the previous March, my sister’s husband, Stefan Madrillo, who is on the staff of the Spanish Embassy in Paris, had introduced me to Miralda Dominguez—the most beautiful girl in Paris as she was generally acknowledged; and although up to that moment I had never cared for any woman, except my sister, and the thought of marriage had never entered my head, the whole perspective of life was changed on the instant.

The one desire that possessed me was to win her love; the one possible prospect which was not utterly barren and empty of everything but wretchedness, was that she would give herself to me for life.

I had one advantage over the crowd of men whom the lodestone of her beauty drew round her. I had lived in her country, spoke her language as readily as my own, and could find many interests in common. Naturally I played that for all it was worth.

From the first moment of meeting I was enslaved by her stately grace, her ravishing smile, her soft, liquid, sympathetic voice, the subtle but ineffable charm of her presence, and the dark lustrous eyes into which I loved to

bring the changing lights of surprise, curiosity, interest and pleasure.

I was miserable when away from her; and should have been wholly happy in her presence if it had not been for the despairing sense of unworthiness which plagued and depressed me. She was a goddess to me, and I a mere clod.

For three weeks—three crazily happy and yet crazily miserable weeks for me—this had continued; and then I had been wired for at a moment's notice, owing to my dear father's sudden illness.

I had to leave within an hour of the receipt of the telegram, without a chance of putting the question on which my whole happiness depended, without even a word of personal leave-taking. And for the whole of the four months since that night I had had to remain in England.

During nearly all the time my father lay hovering between life and death. At intervals, uncertain and transitory, he regained consciousness; and at such moments his first question was for me. I could not think of leaving him, of course; and even when the end came, the settlement of the many affairs connected with the large fortune he left delayed me a further two or three weeks.

My sister assured me that, through some friend or other, she had contrived to let Miralda know something of the facts; but this was no more than a cold comfort. When at length I turned the *Stella's* head toward Lisbon, steaming at the top speed of her powerful engines, I felt how feeble such a written explanation, dribbling through two or three hands and watered down in the dribbling process, might appear to

Miralda, even assuming that she had given me a second thought as the result of those three weeks in Paris.

But I was in Lisbon at last; and although I could not help realizing that a hundred and fifty obstacles might have had time to grow up between us during the long interval, I gritted my teeth in the resolve to overcome them.

Anyway, the following night would show me how the land lay; and, as anything was better than suspense, I gave a sigh of relief at the thought, and having posted the letter to my sister, set off for another prowl round the city.

I had not been there for several years—before I went out with the Yeomanry for a fling at the Boers—and it interested me to note the changes which had taken place. But I thought much more of Miralda than of any changes and not at all of any possible trouble in the streets. After a man has had a few moonlight rides reconnoitring kopjes which are likely to be full of Boer snipers, he isn't going to worry himself grey about a few Portuguese rag-and-bobtail with an itch for his purse.

Besides, I felt well able to take care of myself in any street row. I was lithe and strong and in the pink of condition, and knew fairly well "how to stop 'em," as Jem Whiteway, the old boxer, used to say, with a shake of his bullet head when he tried to get through my guard and I landed him.

But my contempt for the dangers of the streets was a little premature. My experiences that night were destined to change my opinion entirely, and to change a good many other things too. Before the night was many hours older, I

had every reason to be thankful that I had taken a revolver out with me.

It came about in this way. I was skirting that district of the city which is still frequently called the Mouraria—a nest of little, narrow, tortuous by-ways into which I deemed it prudent not to venture too far—and was going down a steep street toward the river front, when the stillness was broken by the hoarse murmur of many voices. I guessed that some sort of a row was in the making, and hurried on to see the fun. And as I reached a turning a little farther down, I found myself in the thick of it.

A small body of police came tearing round the corner running for their lives with a crowd of men at their heels, whooping and yelling like a pack of hounds in full sight of the fox.

As the police passed, one of them struck a vicious blow at me with a club, and I only just managed to jump back and escape the blow. I drew into the shelter of a doorway as the mob followed. The street was very narrow and steep at this point, and the police, seeing the advantage it gave them, rallied to make a stand some forty or fifty yards up the hill above me.

The foremost pursuers paused a few moments to let a good number come up; and then they went for the police for all they were worth. The fight was very hot; but discipline told, as it will; and although the police were tremendously outnumbered, they held their ground well enough at first.

Meanwhile the racket kept bringing up reinforcements for the mob, and some of them began to get disagreeably curious about me. Here was a glorious struggle going on

against the common foe, and I was standing idly by instead of taking a hand in it.

One or two of them questioned me in a jeering tone, and presently some fool yelled out that I was a spy. From taunts and gibing insults, those near me proceeded to threats, fists and sticks were shaken at me, and matters looked decidedly unpleasant.

I kept on explaining that I was a foreigner; but that was no more than a waste of breath; and I looked about for a chance to get away.

I was very awkwardly placed, however. If I went up the street, I should only run into the thick of the fight with the police; while the constant arrival of freshcomers below me made escape in that direction impossible.

Then came a crisis. One excited idiot struck at me with a stick, and of course I had to defend myself; and for a time I was far too busy to heed what was going on in the big row higher up the street. I tried fists at first and, putting my back to the wall, managed to keep the beggars at bay. Then a chance came to seize a big heavy club with which a little brute was trying to break my head; and with that I soon cleared quite a respectable space by laying about me indiscriminately.

But suddenly the club was knocked out of my hands, and a howl of delight hailed my discomfiture. Then I remembered my revolver. I whipped it out and a rather happy thought occurred to me. Shouting at the top of my lungs that I was an Englishman and had nothing to do with either the mob or the police, I grabbed hold of the ringleader of my assailants, and used him as a sort of

hostage. Keeping him between myself and the rest, I shoved the barrel of the revolver against his head and sung out that I would blow out his brains if any other man attempted to harm me.

The ruse served me well. The crowd hung back; and my prisoner, in a holy scare for his life, yelled at his friends to leave me alone.

Whether the trick would have really got me out of the mess I don't know. There was not time to tell, for another development followed almost immediately. Some fresh arrivals came up yelling that the soldiers were close at hand; and we soon heard them.

The mob were now caught between two fires. The police were still holding their own above us, and the troops were hurrying up from the other direction. Some one had the wit to see that the crowd's only chance was to carry the street against the police and clear that way for flight. A fierce attack was made upon them, therefore, and they were driven back to one side, leaving half the roadway clear.

The throng about me melted away, and I let my prisoner go, intending to wait for the troops. But I soon abandoned that idea; for I saw they had clubbed their muskets and were knocking down everybody they saw.

I had already had a blow aimed at me by the police, and had been threatened by the mob; and being in about equal danger from both sides, I was certain to get my head cracked if I remained. Their tactics were to hit first and inquire afterwards, and I therefore adopted the only alternative and took to my heels.

Being among the last to fly I was seen. A tally-ho was raised and four or five of the police came dashing after me. Not knowing the district well, I ran at top speed and bolted round corner after corner, haphazard, keeping a sharp look-out as I ran for some place in which I could take cover.

I had succeeded in shaking off all but two or three when, on turning into one street, I spied the window of a house standing partly open. To dart to it, throw it wide, clamber in, and close it after me took only a few seconds; and as I squatted on the floor, breathing hard from the chase and the effects of my former tussle, I had the intense satisfaction of hearing my pursuers go clattering past the house.

That I might be taken for a burglar and handed over to the police by the occupants of the house, did not bother me in the least. I could very easily explain matters. It was the virtual certainty of a cracked pate, not the fear of arrest from which I had bolted; and that I had escaped with a sound skull was enough for me for the present.

But no one came near me; so I stopped where I was until the row outside had died down. It seemed to die a hard death; and I must have sat there in the dark for over an hour before I thought of venturing out to return to my rooms.

Naturally unwilling to leave by the window, I groped my way out into the passage and struck a match to look for the front door. Close to me was a staircase leading to the upper rooms; and at the end of the passage a second flight down to the basement.

Like so many houses in Lisbon this was built on a steep hill, and guessing that I should find a way out downstairs at the back, I decided to use that means of leaving, as it offered less chance of my being observed.

I had just reached the head of the stairway, when a door below was unlocked and several people entered the house. A confused murmur of voices followed, and among them I heard that of a woman speaking in a tone of angry protest against some mistake which those with her were making.

The answering voices were those of men—strident, stern, distinctly threatening, and mingled with oaths.

Then the woman spoke again; repeating her protest in angry tones; but her voice was now vibrant with rising alarm.

“Silence!”

The command broke her sentence in two, and her words died away in muffled indistinctness, suggesting that force had been used to secure obedience.

Then a light was kindled; there was some scuffling along the passage; and they all appeared to enter a room.

I paused, undecided what to do. The thing had a very ugly look; but I had had quite enough trouble to satisfy me for one night. I didn't want to go blundering into an affair which might be no more than a family quarrel; especially as I was trespassing in the house.

A few seconds later, however, came the sound of trouble; a blow, a groan, and the thud of a fall.

I caught my breath in fear that the woman had been struck down.

But the next instant a shrill piercing cry for help rang out in her voice, and this also was stifled as if a hand had been clapped on her mouth.

That decided things for me.

Whatever the consequences, I could not stop to think of them while a woman was in such danger as that cry for help had signalled.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENTS

[Table of Contents](#)

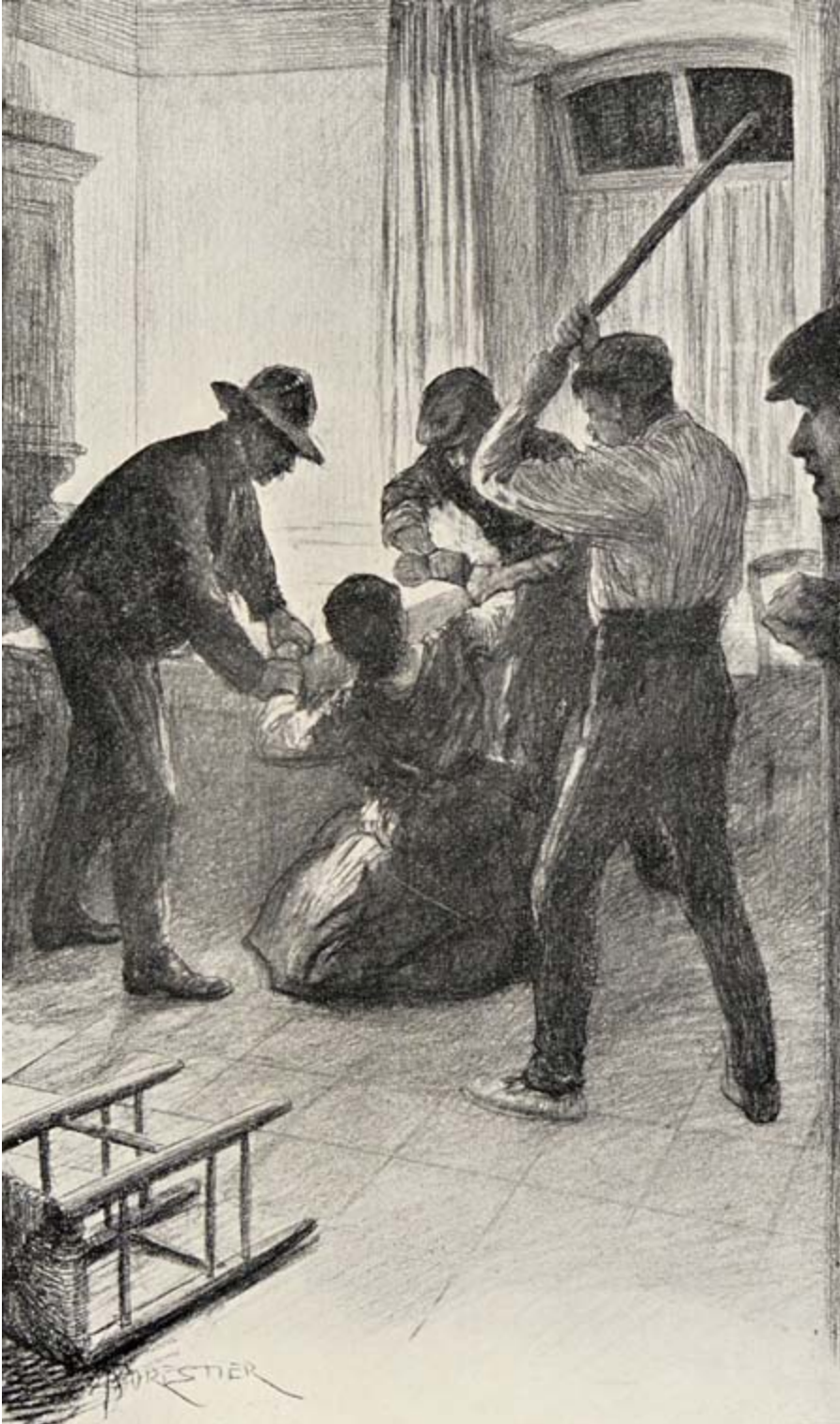
MY view of the trouble was that it was a case of robbery. The disordered condition of the city was sure to be used by the roughs as a cover for their operations; and I jumped to the conclusion that the woman whose cry I was answering had been decoyed to the house to be robbed.

But as I ran down the stairs I heard enough to show me that it was in reality a sort of by-product of the riot in the streets. The woman was a prisoner in the hands of some of the mob, and they were threatening her with violence because she was, in their jargon, an enemy of the cause of the people.

To my surprise it was against this that she was protesting so vehemently. Her speech, in strong contrast to that of the men, was proof of refinement and culture, while the little note of authority which I had observed at first suggested rank. It was almost inconceivable, therefore, that she could have anything in common with such fellows as her captors.

The door of the room in which they all were stood slightly ajar, and as I reached it she reiterated her protest with passionate vehemence.

“You are mad. I am your friend, not your enemy. I swear that. One of you must know Dr. Barosa. Find him and bring him here and he will bear out every word I have said.”



“Holding my revolver in readiness, I entered.”

“That’s enough of that. Lies won’t help you,” came the reply in the same gruff bullying tone I had heard before.

“Now, Henriques,” he added, as if ordering a comrade to finish the grim work.

Holding my revolver in readiness, I entered. There were three of the rascals. Two had hold of the woman who knelt between them with her back to me, while the third, also with his back to me, was just raising a club to strike her.

They were so intent upon their job and probably so certain that no one was in the house, that they did not notice me until I had had time to give the fellow with the club a blow on the side of the head which sent him staggering into a corner with an oath of surprise and rage. The others released their hold of the woman, and as I stepped in front of her, they fell away in healthy fear of my levelled weapon.

They were the reverse of formidable antagonists; rascals from the gutter apparently; venomous enough in looks, but undersized, feeble specimens; ready to attack an unarmed man or a defenceless woman, but utterly cowed by the sight of the business end of my revolver.

They slunk back toward the door, rage, baulked malice and fear on their ugly dirty faces.

“A spy! A spy!” exclaimed the brute who had the stick; and at the word they felt for their knives.

“Put your hands up, you dogs,” I cried. “The man who draws a knife will get a bullet in his head.”

Meanwhile the woman had scrambled to her feet, with a murmured word of thanks to the Virgin for my opportune intervention, and then to my intense surprise she put her hand on my arm and said in a tone of entreaty: “Do not fire, monsieur. They have only acted in ignorance.”

“You hear that, you cowardly brutes,” I said, without turning to look at her, for I couldn’t take my eyes off the men. “Clear out, or——” and I stepped toward them as if I meant to fire.

In that I made a stupid blunder as it turned out. They hung together a second and then at a whisper from the fellow who appeared to be the leader, they suddenly bolted out of the room, and locked the door behind them.

Not at all relishing the idea of being made a prisoner in this way, I shouted to them to unlock the door, threatening to break it down and shoot them on sight if they refused. As they did not answer I picked up a heavy chair to smash in one of the panels, when my companion again interposed.

But this time it was on my and her own account. “They have firearms in the house, monsieur. If you show yourself, they will shoot you; and I shall be again at their mercy.”

She spoke in a tone of genuine concern and, as I recognized the wisdom of the caution, I put the chair down again and turned to her.

It was the first good square look I had had at her, and I was surprised to find that she was both young and surpassingly handsome—an aristocrat to her finger tips, although plainly dressed like one of the people. Her features were finely chiselled, she had an air of unmistakable refinement, she carried herself with the dignity of a person of rank, and her eyes, large and of a singular greenish brown hue, were bent upon me with the expression of one accustomed to expect ready compliance with her wishes. She had entirely recovered her self-possession and in some way had braided up the mass of golden auburn hair, the

dishevelled condition of which I had noticed in the moment of my entrance.

“You are probably right, madame,” I said; “but I don’t care for the idea of being locked in here while those rascals fetch some companions.”

I addressed her as madame; but she couldn’t be more than four or five and twenty, and might be much younger.

“There will be no danger, monsieur,” she replied in a tone of complete confidence.

“There appeared to be plenty of it just now; and the sooner we are out of this place, the better I shall be pleased.” And with that I turned to the window to see if we could get out that way. It was, however, closely barred.

“You may accept my assurance. These men have been acting under a complete misunderstanding. They will bring some one who will explain everything to them.”

“Dr. Barosa, you mean?”

“What do you know of him?” The question came sharply and with a touch of suspicion, as it seemed to me.

“Nothing, except that I heard you mention him just as I entered.”

She paused a moment, keeping her eyes on my face, and then, with a little shrug, she turned away. “I will see if my ser—my companion is much hurt,” she said, and bent over the man who was lying against the wall.

I noticed the slip; but it was nothing to me if she wished to make me think he was a companion instead of a servant.

She knew little or nothing about how to examine the man’s hurt, so I offered to do it for her. “Will you allow me to

examine him, madame? I have been a soldier and know a little about first aid."

She made way for me and went to the other end of the room while I looked him over. He had had just such a crack on the head as I feared for myself when bolting from the troops. It had knocked the senses out of him; but that was all. He was in no danger; so I made him as comfortable as I could and told her my opinion.

"He will be all right, no doubt," was her reply, with about as much feeling as I should have shown for somebody else's dog; and despite her handsome face and air of position, I began to doubt whether he would not have been better worth saving than she.

"How did all this happen?"

She gave a little impatient start at the question, as if resenting it. "He was brought here with me, monsieur, and the men struck him," she replied after a pause.

"Yes. But why were you brought here?"

"I have not yet thanked you for coming to my assistance, monsieur," she replied irrelevantly. "Believe me, I do thank you most earnestly. I owe you my life, perhaps."

It was an easy guess that she found the question distasteful and had parried it intentionally; so I followed the fresh lead. "I did no more than I hope any other man would have done, madame," I said.

"That is the sort of reply I should look for from an Englishman, monsieur." Her strange eyes were fixed shrewdly upon me as she made this guess at my nationality.

"I am English," I replied with a smile.

“I am glad. I would rather be under an obligation to an Englishman than to any one except a countryman of my own.” She smiled very graciously, almost coquettishly, as if anxious to convince me of her absolute sincerity. But she spoiled the effect directly. Lifting her eyes to heaven and with a little toss of the hands, she exclaimed. “What a mercy of the Virgin that you chanced to be in the house—this house of all others in the city.”

I understood. She wished to cross-examine me. “You are glad that I arrived in time to interrupt things just now?” I asked quietly.

“Monsieur!” Eyes, hands, lithe body, everything backed up the tone of surprise that I should question it. “Do I not owe you my life?” I came to the conclusion that she was as false as woman of her colour can be. But she was an excellent actress.

“Then let me suggest that we speak quite frankly. Let me lead the way. I am an Englishman, here in Lisbon on some important business, and not, as the doubt underneath your question, implies—a spy. I——”

“Monsieur!” she cried again as if in almost horrified protest.

“I was caught in the thick of a street fight,” I continued, observing that for all her energetic protest she was weighing my explanation very closely. “And had to run for it with the police at my heels. I saw a window of this house standing partly open and scrambled through it for shelter.”

“What a blessed coincidence for me!”

“It would be simpler to say, madame, that you do not believe me,” I said bluntly.

“Ah, but on my faith——”

“Let me put it to you another way,” I cut in. “I don’t know much of the ways of spies, but if I were one I should have contented myself with listening at that door, instead of entering, and have locked you all in instead of letting myself be caught in this silly fashion.” Then I saw the absurdity of losing my temper and burst out laughing.

She drew herself up. “You are amused, monsieur.”

“One may as well laugh while one can. If my laugh offends you, I beg your pardon for it, but I am laughing at my own conversion. An hour or two back I was ridiculing the idea of there being anything to bother about in the condition of the Lisbon streets. Since then I have been attacked by the police, nearly torn to pieces by the mob, had to bolt from the troops, and now you thank me for having saved your life and in the same breath take me for a spy. Don’t you think that is enough cause for laughter? If you have any sense of humour you surely will.”

“I did not take you for a spy, monsieur,” she replied untruthfully. “But you have learnt things while here. We are obliged to be cautious.”

“My good lady, how on earth can it matter? We have met by the merest accident; there is not the slightest probability that we shall ever meet again; and if we did—well, you suggested just now that you know something of the ways of us English, and in that case you will feel perfectly certain that anything I have seen or heard here to-night will never pass my lips.”

“You have not mentioned your name, monsieur?”

“Ralph Donnington. I arrived yesterday and stayed at the Avenida. Would you like some confirmation? My card case is here, and this cigar case has my initials outside and my full name inside.”

“I do not need anything of that sort,” she cried quickly, waving her hands. But she read both the name and the initials.

“What have you inferred from what you have seen here to-night?”

“That the rascals who brought you here are some of the same sort of riff-raff I saw attacking the police and got hold of you as an enemy of the people. I heard that bit of cant from one of them. That you are of the class they are accustomed to regard as their oppressors was probably as evident to them as to me; and when you expressed sympathy with them——”

“You heard that?” she broke in earnestly.

“Certainly, when I heard you tell them to fetch this Dr. Barosa. But it is nothing to me; nor, thank Heaven, are your Portuguese politics or plots. But what is a good deal to me is how we are going to get out of this.”

“And for what do you take me, monsieur?”

“For one of the most beautiful enthusiasts I ever had the pleasure of meeting, madame,” I replied with a bow. “And a leader whom any one should be glad indeed to follow.”

She was woman enough to relish the compliment and she smiled. “You think I am a leader of these people, then?”

“It is my regret that I am not one of them.”

“I am afraid that is not true, Mr. Donnington.”

“At any rate I shall be delighted to follow your lead out of this house.”

“You will not be in any danger, I assure you of that.”

As she spoke we heard the sounds of some little commotion outside the room and I guessed that the scoundrels had brought up some more of their kind.

“I hope so, but I think we shall soon know.”

“I have your word of honour that you will not breathe a word of anything you have witnessed here to-night.”

“Certainly. I pledge my word of honour.”

The men outside appeared to have a good deal to chatter about and seemed none too ready to enter. They were probably discussing who should have the privilege of being the first to face my revolver. I did not like the look of the thing at all.

“If they are your friends, why don’t they come in?” I asked my companion. “Hadn’t you better speak to them?”

She crossed to the door and it occurred to me to place the head of a chair under the handle and make it a little more difficult for them to get in.

“You need have no fear, Mr. Donnington,” she said with a touch of contempt as I took this precaution.

“It’s only a slight test of the mood they are in.”

As she reached the door the injured man began to show signs of recovering his senses; and I stooped over him while she spoke to the men.

“Is Dr. Barosa there?” she called.

Getting no reply, she repeated the question and knocked on the panel.

There was an answer this time, but not at all what she had expected. One of the fellows fired a pistol and the bullet pierced the thin panel and went dangerously near her head.

I pulled her across to a spot where she would be safe from a chance shot. Only just in time, for half a dozen shots were fired in quick succession.

She was going to speak again, but I stopped her with a gesture; and then extinguished one of the two candles by which the room was lighted.

A long pause followed the shots, as if the scoundrels were listening to learn the effect of the firing.

In the silence the man in the corner groaned, and I heard the key turned in the lock as some one tried to push the door open.

I drew out my weapon.

"You will not shoot them, Mr. Donnington?" exclaimed my companion under her breath.

"Doesn't this man Barosa know your voice?" I whispered.

"Of course."

"Then he isn't there," I said grimly.

I raised my voice and called loudly: "Don't you dare to enter. I'll shoot the first man that tries to." Then to my companion: "You'd better crouch down in the corner here. There'll be trouble the instant they are inside."

But she had no lack of pluck and shook her head disdainfully. "You must not fire. If you shoot one of these men you will not be safe for an hour in the city."

"I don't appear to be particularly safe as it is," I answered drily.

There was another pause; then a vigorous shove broke the chair I had placed to the door and half a dozen men rushed in.

As I raised my arm to fire, my companion caught it and stopped me.

For the space of a few seconds the scoundrels stared at us, their eyes gleaming in vicious malice and triumph. I read murder in them.

“Throw your weapon on the table there,” ordered one of them.

Then a thought occurred to me.

I made as if to obey; but, instead of doing anything of the sort, I extinguished the remaining candle, grabbed my companion’s arm, drew her to the opposite side of the room and, pushing her into a corner, stood in front of her.

And in the pitchy darkness we waited for the ruffians to make the first move in their attack.

CHAPTER III

THE RECEPTION

[Table of Contents](#)

THE effect of my impulse to extinguish the light in the room was much greater than I had anticipated. It proved to be the happiest thought I had ever had; for I am convinced that it saved my life, and probably that of my companion.

The average Portuguese of the lower class is too plugged with superstition ever to feel very happy in the dark. He is quick to people it with all sorts of impalpable terrors. And these fellows were soon in a bad scare.

For a few moments the wildest confusion prevailed. Execrations, threats, cries of anger, and prayers were mingled in about equal proportions; and every man who had a pistol fired it off. At least, that appeared to be the case, judging by the number of shots.

As they aimed at the corner where they had seen us, however, nothing resulted except a waste of ammunition.

The darkness was all in my favour. I knew that any man who touched me in the dark must be an enemy; while they could not tell, when they ran against any one, whether it was friend or foe. More than one struggle among them told me this, and showed me further what was of at least equal importance—that they were afraid to advance farther into the room.

When a lull came in the racket, therefore, I adopted another ruse. I crept toward the corner where they had seen us, and, stamping heavily, cried out that I would shoot the first man I touched.

Another volley of shots followed; but I was back out of range again, and soon had very welcome proof that the trick was successful. Each man appeared to mistake his neighbour for me, and some of them were pretty roughly handled by their friends before the blunders were discovered.

Some one shouted for a light; and in the lull that succeeded we had a great stroke of luck. The wounded man, who lay in a corner near to them, began to move his feet restlessly, and they immediately jumped to the conclusion that I was going to attack them from there.

I backed this idea promptly. Letting out a fierce yell of rage, I fired a shot at random. This filled to overflowing the cup of their cowardice, and in another moment they had bolted like rabbits out of the room and locked the door again.

I lost no time in relighting the candles, and set to work to pile the furniture against the door to prevent them taking us again by surprise, and to give me time to see if we couldn't get away by the window.

Opening it as quietly as possible I had a good look at the bars, and saw that it would be possible to force them sufficiently apart with wedges for us to squeeze through.

"We can reach the street this way, madame?" I asked my companion, who was now very badly scared.

"It is useless," she replied despairingly.

"Not so useless as stopping here. We can't expect such luck a second time as we have just had." I spoke sharply, wishing to rouse her.

But she only shook her head and tossed up her hands. So I began to break up some of the furniture to make some wedges, when she jumped to her feet with a cry of surprise and delight.

“It is his voice,” she exclaimed, her eyes shining and her face radiant with delight. Whoever “he” might be, it was easy to see what she felt about him.

Then the key was turned once more and an attempt made to force away my impromptu barricade.

I closed the window instantly and blew out one of the candles.

“Open the door. It is I, Barosa,” called a voice.

“Let him in, monsieur. Let him in at once. We are safe now.”

“Are you sure?” I asked, suspecting a trick.

Again the rich colour flooded her face. “Do you think I do not know his voice, or that he would harm me? Let him in. Let him in, I say,” she cried excitedly.

I pulled away enough of the barricade to admit one man at a time. I reckoned that no one man of the crowd I had seen would have the pluck to come in alone.

A dark, handsome, well-dressed man squeezed his way through the opening with an impatient exclamation on the score of my precaution. And the instant she saw his face, my companion sprang toward him uttering his name impetuously.

“Manoel! Manoel! Thank the Holy Virgin you have come.”

His appearance excited me also, for I recognized him at a glance. He had been pointed out to me in Paris some time before by my brother-in-law as one of the chief agents of